

Refining the Rental Assistance Tool Kit



King County Rental Assistance Advisory Group
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Katharine Gale Consulting
Berkeley, CA



(510) 710-9176, kgaleconsulting@sbcglobal.net

Outline

- ✓ Rental Assistance as a Tool in the “Crisis Response” System Model
- ✓ Rental Assistance Design Issues: Cliffs & Steps, Shallow & Deep
- ✓ Progressive Engagement - the Light Touch approach
- ✓ Prevention Targeting
- ✓ Cross-program coordination: Access, Eligibility, Funding Pools, Reporting

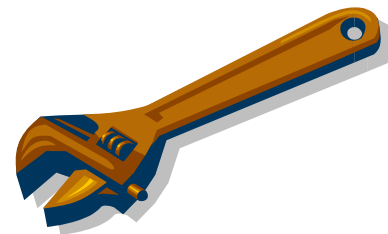
Opening Doors

“Transform homeless services into crisis response systems that prevent homelessness and rapidly return people who experience homelessness to stable housing.”

-- Opening Doors Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness, p. 7

Rental Assistance - a great tool for crisis response model

- Quick(er)
- Can be more individualized
- Often more flexible
- Offers client choice



Design Considerations

Cliffs



or
Stairs?



Shallow or Deep?



Design Considerations

- Deep, permanent subsidies (a la Section 8) are great but, though almost always helpful not always needed to end homelessness
- Shallow permanent subsidies are great – serve many more people – but not many sources ...yet
- Time-limited subsidies can do the trick, but ***may*** not be enough (what's the goal?)

Time-limited

Stairs versus cliffs...

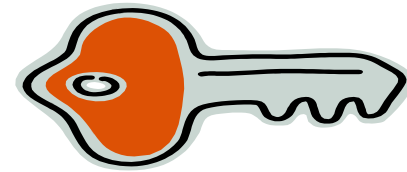
- Cliff: cuts off suddenly
- Stairs: steps down gradually ... but usually triggered by time not income changes, so...

what's the difference??

Design Considerations

Rental assistance is basically an income transfer...

So two key questions:

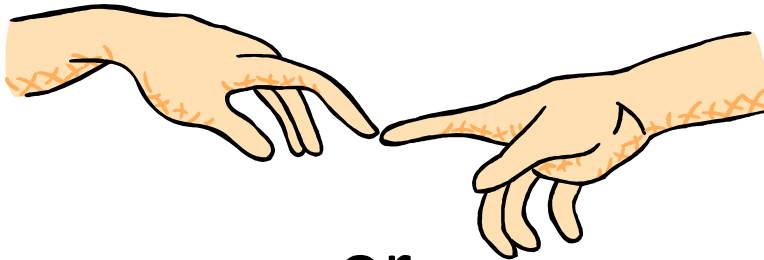


1) How much do I need to provide to meet my program goal – housing now and *anticipated* future housing stability?

2) Who am I not helping if I provide more support than is needed to meet my goal?

Progressive Engagement

A different kind of design:



Lightest touch possible

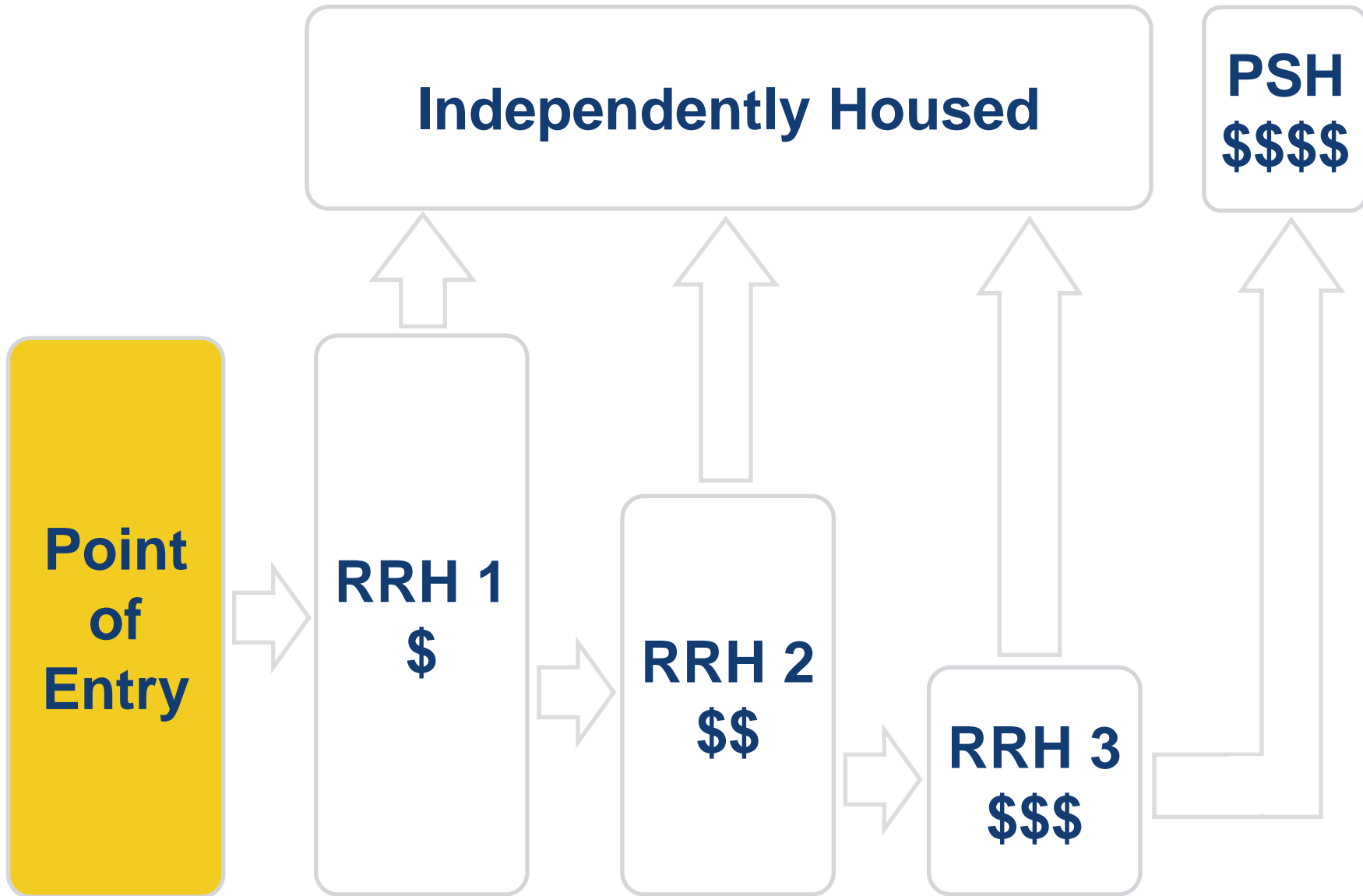
or

“you can always add more, but you can’t take it away”

or

.....





Homelessness Prevention



“The issue of targeting...”

“Any agency may use effective prevention activities, alone or in combination, and will probably prevent some homelessness. But prevention resources are unlikely to be used *efficiently* unless they are part of a larger structure of planning and organization *that address the issue of targeting.*”

(Burt et al. 2007, p.xxiii)



Which of these statements is true?

- People who become homeless are the same as other very low-income people.
- People who become homeless are different from other very low-income people.



Which statement is true?

Right... they both are!

People who become homeless ***are*** different from the general population and from other poor people:

- Households with one person (63% of homeless, 10% of US households)
- Mentally ill (16.3% of lowest income v. 28% of shelter residents)
- Veterans (15% v. 5% of poverty population)

BUT....

There are many more people who share these characteristics who don't become homeless than do!

- Less than 0.5% of Veterans were homeless last year
- About 2% of people with mental illness were homeless on a given night in 2000
- 1.4% of one-person households were homeless in 2007

Like risk factors for a disease...

Having a risk factor, or even several, does not mean that you will get the disease. Most women who have one or more breast cancer risk factors never develop the disease, while many women with breast cancer have no apparent risk factors (other than being a woman and growing older).

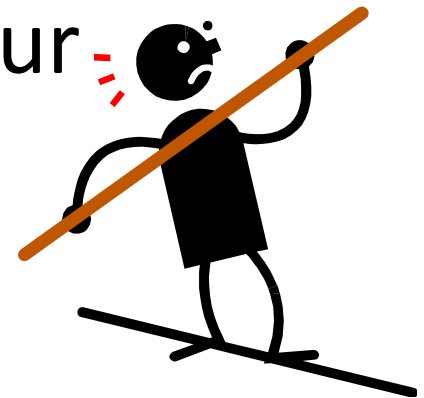


Lots of very poor people... few homeless people

- Lots of people face a housing crisis but not all of them become homeless, even when it looks like they will
- According to 2010 census
 - 12% of Americans moved in 2010
 - 19% of unemployed Americans moved
- Some of them surely faced a housing crisis, even eviction, but not all of them became homeless or entered the homeless system

The Sustainability Paradox

The more prevention assistance is targeted to people who seem to us to be able to make it with very limited assistance, the less likely it is we are actually reaching people who would become homeless without our assistance.



So, how do we find the people who *will* become homeless?

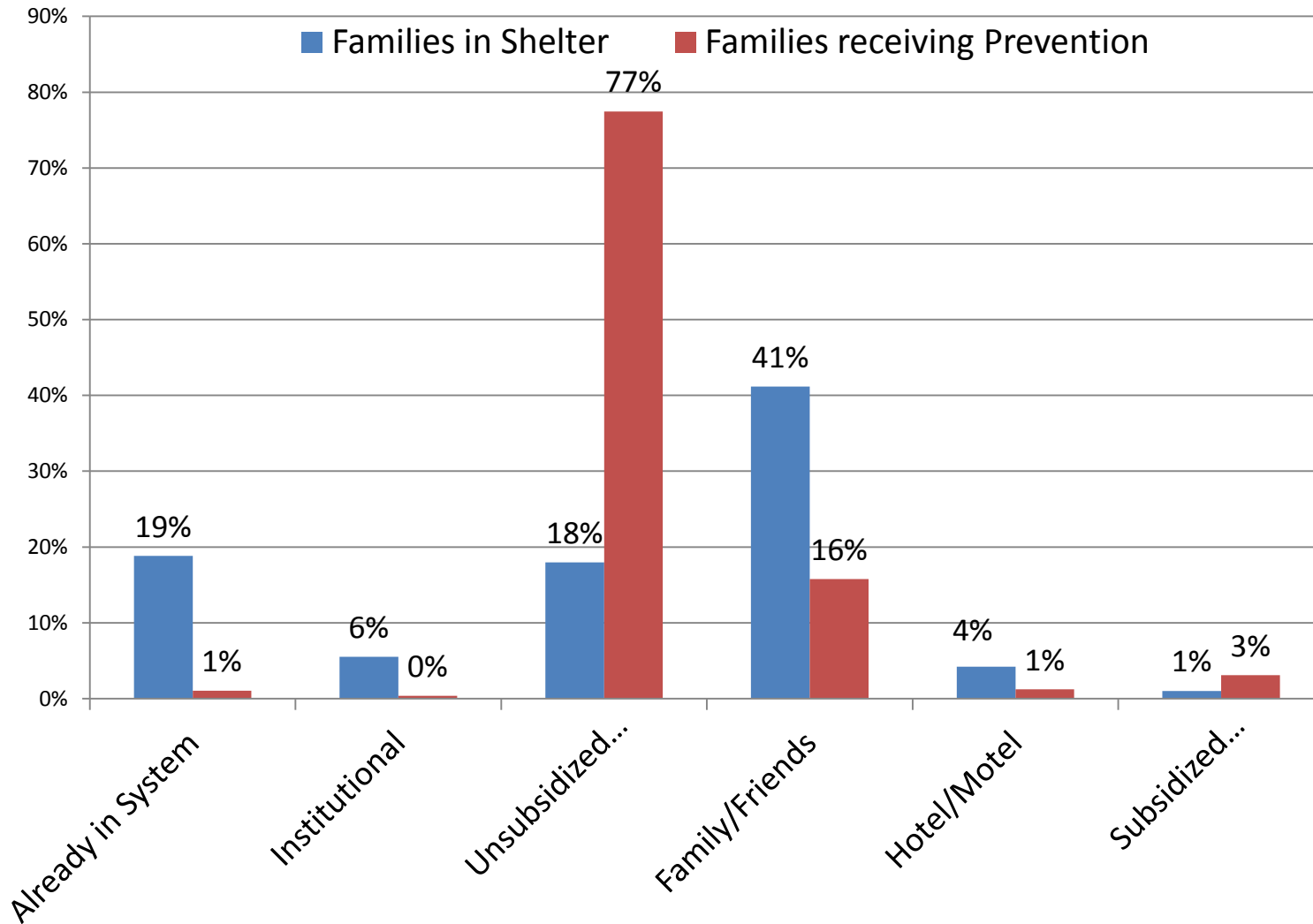
Short answer is: we don't fully know... yet...
but we've got some ideas...

1. Where do they enter homelessness from?
2. What are their *relevant* characteristics?

Look at data!



Comparative Entry-Point Analysis



Other data on sheltered households

Hennepin County did this for families

- Sheltered and prevention families looked ***similar*** in terms of felony history, limited English proficiency, and disability status
- Sheltered families looked different in terms of income, age of head of household and past homelessness

Characteristic	Served with Prevention	Sheltered
Income		
\$0 - \$499	11%	66%
\$500 - \$999	29%	28%
\$1,000 or more	60%	6%
Age of Head of Household		
Under 22	1%	29%
22-29	21%	39%
30-39	35%	20%
40+	43%	12%
Family previously homeless	36%	63%

Homebase Targeting Study

(Shinn and Greer 2012... publishing soon)

- Looked at @11,000 families who applied for services over a four year period
- 12.8% of all (served and unserved) entered shelter within three years of applying
- Study compared characteristics and circumstances of those who entered with those who didn't

Homebase Targeting Study: High Risk of Shelter Entry (Risk Factor):

- Female Head of Household
- Pregnancy
- Child younger than two
- History of public assistance
- Eviction threat
- High mobility in last year
- History of protective services
- High conflict in household
- Disruptions as a child (e.g. foster care, shelter history as youth)
- Shelter history as an adult
- Recent shelter application
- Seeking to reintegrate into community from an institution
- High number of shelter applications

Homebase Targeting Study: Not significant for Shelter Entry

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Number of children
- Marital status
- Veteran status
- Losing assistance in the last year
- Overcrowding
- Doubled up
- Extremely cost burdened
- High rent arrears
- Home in disrepair
- Subsidy receipt
- Chronic physical health problems
- History of mental health problems
- History of substance abuse
- History of domestic violence
- Any involvement with legal system
- Giving birth as a teenager

Created a simple screener

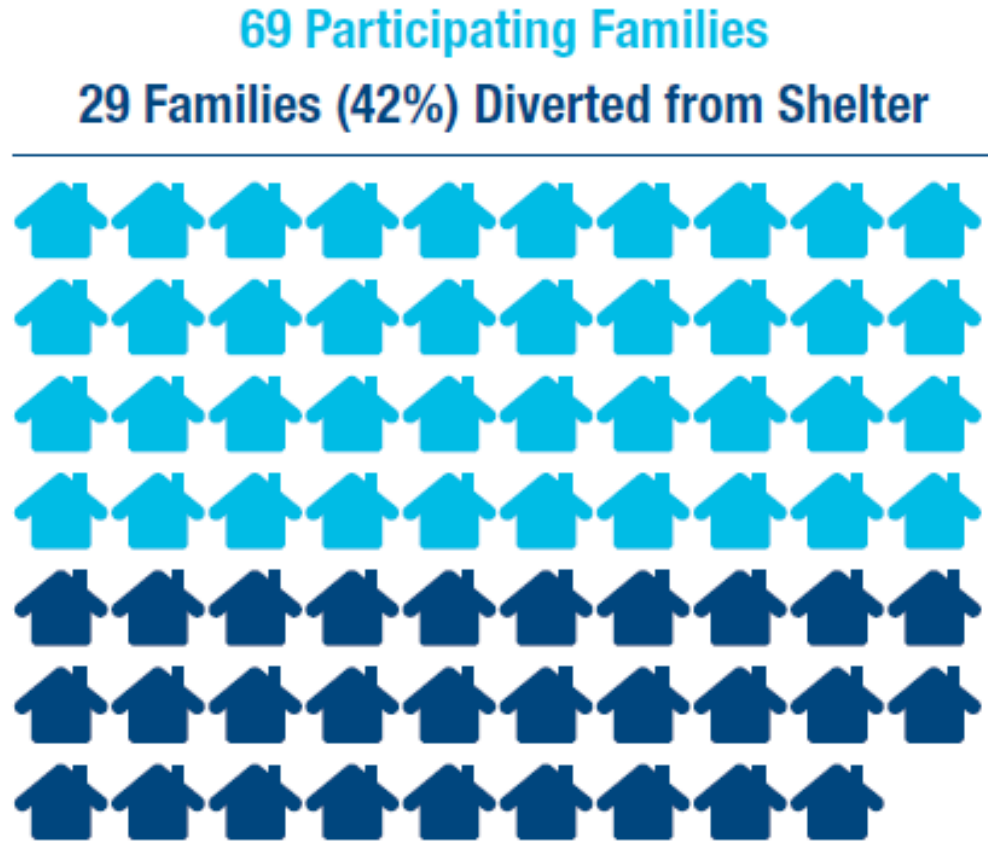
- New screener applies points to different characteristics (see handout)
- Program will also take into account situation/urgency of the crisis
- Screener expected to increase likelihood of serving people who would otherwise become homeless

Where should prevention happen?

- Culhane says converge on the front door:
Diversion
- Some experiments in place-based targeting...
Inconclusive.
- If going upstream, have to open wider funnels and say “No” more.



Dudley Diversion Pilot



Two months, one staff person, \$50,000; 11 stabilized in own housing; 10 identified friends or family; eight bypassed shelter to a better fit.

Why coordinate?

- For ease of client access
- To avoid duplication/discourage "shopping"
- To avoid gaps/meet range of needs
- To reduce work
- To understand impact

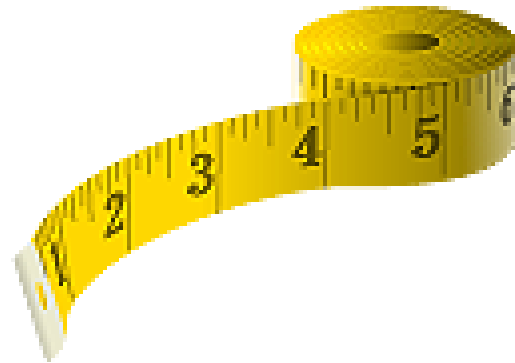


Ways to coordinate

- Client Access: Coordinated Entry, or Funding Pool (no wrong door) or geography/population focus
- Reduce duplication: remove unnecessary caps that require multiples sources to help one household
- Avoid gaps: remove criteria that exclude populations or clear distinctions by fund and “right-sized”
- Reduce shopping: all of the above plus share data
- Understand impact: Use common reporting or share data!

Coordinate with purpose

- Evaluate the outcome of your coordination
 - Know *why* you are coordinating (which of the above?)
 - Try things with feed-back and assessment built in
 - Measure the change



Questions and Discussion

